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**The Current State of University Sexual Consent Education and the Sexual Consent
Curriculum Proposal for NCBI**

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Literature Review, Secondary Data Collection:

Across the board, United States colleges and universities are struggling with how to handle sexual assault crimes against their students and how to educate the campus community on sexual consent and bystander intervention. The U.S. Department of Justice reports that 4 in 10 schools offer sexual assault training, and less than 2 in 5 schools train their campus security staff for sexual assault response⁽¹⁾. As far as education and victim support, only approximately 60% of schools provide safety training, of which only 6 in 10 teach on sexual assault, and less than a third teach about acquaintance rape⁽¹⁾. Despite the fact that the Department of Justice requires these trainings and educational programs at school, compliance is low, and quality matches.

Another layer of the problem lies with the limitations with colleges and universities. Not all adults go to college, or go to college straight from high school, leaving a gap in the national education on consent education. In an interview with University of Montana Sexual Assault Resource Center Outreach Coordinator LeShawn George, George stated the problem lies in not educating citizens from a young age. Ideally, by the time a person reaches the legal age of consent, they should have a working knowledge that a verbal yes is required for consent. George argues that it would be simple to teach sexual consent to minors because they already have an understanding of giving other forms of consent, like accepting the Terms & Conditions on a mobile phone app. This issue with lack of student knowledge stems from the lack of student knowledge of sex education prior to college. If a student's first learning experience happens in college, it may be too late to change their attitudes or may not occur at all if the student doesn't go to college. George calls for a comprehensive sexual education program to be worked into high school curriculum, and for sexual consent to be covered in a thorough and non-threatening manner⁽²⁾.

The documentary *The Hunting Ground* shows the failure of focusing prevention efforts at the college and university level. Not only does the film point out the lack of victim rights, advocacy, and justice, but the film also dives in to how the media shapes viewers' ideas of sexual consent. One striking section of the film showed a reel from ESPN discussing a football player's rape charges. The ESPN commentators, who have no formal knowledge of law or sexual assault, assume that the accuser is only crying for attention and attempting to ruin a bright star's budding football career. This was just a sample of the media response to sexual assault claims and perpetuating a culture where a survivor of assault is wrong, despite being legally correct within the terms of consent; the victims know their consent was taken from them, but the media and administrators at the universities will not give them justice. This reaffirms the need for sexual consent education to allow for a cultural shift in attitude and the dissemination of correct information, instead of students assuming the opinions of others as fact when it comes to assault and consent⁽³⁾.

Of the colleges and universities that do provide sexual consent education, the prevention efforts may come too late. The Make Your Move Missoula campaign advocates for bystander awareness as well as sexual consent education. However, a large majority of campus sexual assaults happen in the first six weeks of school, too soon for any prevention effort to be performed or to be effective. It is also difficult for students to realize when would be a good chance for them to step up and intervene because of the perceived "blurred lines" of consent. Dr. Kimberly Brown Campbell, the campus assault prevention coordinator at the University of Montana, argues that it is better to be safe than sorry, and that just checking in with friends or strangers who appear to be in compromising situations could help prevent an assault⁽⁴⁾.

The Student Assault Resource Center at the University of Montana not only provides resources to survivors of assault, but also provides trainings and educations to change the rape culture that still pervades on most campuses across the nation. SARC is looking to branch out with their educational programming to the local high schools because they believe initiating the conversation at a younger age will prove more effective in preventing assaults through adulthood⁽⁵⁾.

National Scope of the Problem:

While it is easy to assume that certain universities are the only ones with sexual assault issues because of the media attention, this is an unfortunate and ill-addressed issue at campuses across the nation. It has become such a cultural issue that President Obama launched the “It’s On Us” campaign. This campaign targets lack of awareness and illicit a need for attitude change.

The first six weeks of the first year are when female students are most likely to be sexually assaulted, before most assault prevention training programs can take place or before belief changes can be solidified. New media campaigns such as #DontAcceptRape put the accountability on the students to pressure college administration into taking this issue seriously. As discussed in *The Hunting Ground*, often college administration is more concern with public image and maintaining donor funds than they are about prosecuting possible student assault cases, which lets many perpetrators off with no punishment and leaves survivors of assault feeling unsafe and unwelcome on their college campuses.

One in five women will be sexually assaulted by the time they reach college commencement. This issue stems from a lack of education and a lack of consistency in the laws regarding consent and rape. The prominent cultural belief that someone is “asking for it” or that

sobriety is not necessary to give consent lead to the rape culture that permeates institutions of higher education. Although some education is done at the college level to prevent sexual assault, the results have been minimal. This issue is not just specific to certain schools who have been exposed to media coverage around the issue, like the University of Montana, but is seen across the nation and the globe.

Solution:

The issue of the lack of sexual consent education cannot be targeted to college students. Not all adults go to college straight from high school, if they go at all, and not all students go to an institution that values sexual consent education awareness and assault prevention. Since the current system is not educating a large proportion of U.S. adults, nor is it giving time to allow attitude and behavior impact before the critical weeks where the majority of campus assaults happen. Education must begin while a larger portion of the population is still in school and is still forming moral values. Therefore, this project is aimed at teaching consent education to middle school and high school students.

Action:

This GLI Capstone group, under the guidance of David Beck, created a modular education program for NCBI, named ASC 1st, to implement with their various middle school and high school trainings. The curriculum is gender and sexuality inclusive so it can easily be adopted to various populations. The content focuses on respect and empathy, and it allows students to engage with the material through interactive discussions, activities, and reflections.

Evaluation:

By creating a pretest and posttest, NCBI will be able to evaluate the impact of the curriculum on the specific participants. The pretest (found at the end of this paper) was given to a group of NCBI leaders to examine if we were asking the right questions. Because the pretest asks ranking questions, we are able to quantify the data. The posttest will be exactly the same and will be administered only to the participants who received the trainings. The pretest will be administered at the beginning of the training session, and the posttest will be administered six months after the program. Waiting six months to send the posttest will allow NCBI to evaluate which aspects of the curriculum lead to long term attitude and behavior change, and to adjust the curriculum to create stronger change for the next group who receives the training.

Conclusion:

Taking a community health program planning approach to this program allows designers and implementers a greater chance of success. By conducting a secondary needs assessment through current literature and media analysis, the design of the program goes along with the needs of the population and allows us to accurately identify the core issues surrounding sexual consent and sexual assault prevention. Having a clear evaluation process makes our program more easily adaptable and will allow NCBI to have quantifiable results when the possibility for the need for funding arises. Without adding these necessary structural aspects to the program, ASC 1st would not be set up for success and would not be expected to continue to grow or receive funding. With an issue as important as sexual assault prevention, it is vital to take a sustainable, thoughtful approach to curriculum planning.

Resources:

1. Sexual assault on campus: What colleges and universities are doing about it - 205521.pdf. . .
<http://permanent.access.gpo.gov/lps66801/205521.pdf>.
2. George, L. (2015, October 21). Sexual Consent Education [Personal interview].
3. Dick, K. (Director). (2015). *The hunting ground* [Motion picture].
4. Brown Campbell, K. (2015, November 4). Make Your Move Missoula: Bystander Intervention [Conference Presentation].
5. Student Assault Resource Center, University of Montana. 2015.